

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

the Sabbath, saying : This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day."¹

Almost from the beginning, persecution had come upon her, of a more material kind than the assaults of the evil spirits in her visions, and it lasted all through the earlier years of her public ministry. The persons to whom she had thus made herself spiritually subject, and especially the women, disliked her mode of life and distrusted her conduct. " She could hardly exercise an act of devotion in public, without suffering calumnies, impediments, and persecutions, particularly from those who ought most to have protected her and even to have continually encouraged her in those very acts." Not only Suora Palmerina, but others of the Mantellate, her sisters in religion, reviled and slandered her, and called upon their superiors to correct her. They even gained over some of the Dominican friars to their side, who refused to have any dealings with her, often deprived her of the Blessed Sacrament in Communion, and even for a while took away her faithful confessor from her. At times, when they condescended to let her communicate in their church, they would insist upon her straightway leaving off her prayers of thanksgiving and going home ; which was a sheer impossibility for Catherine, as she used to communicate with such fervour that, immediately afterwards, she would pass into the state of ecstasy, in which for hours she would be totally unconscious. On one occasion, finding her in this condition, they forcibly threw her out of the church at midday, and left her in the heat of the sun, watched over by some of her companions, until she came to her senses. One friar even brutally kicked her as she lay helpless. Of course we are told that he came to an evil end, as also did another friar of the same type, " religious in habit, but not in deeds," who, when the other friars were in the choir of San Domenico after dinner, catching sight of her in the church when she was in ecstasy, came down and pricked her in many places with a needle. Catherine was not aroused in the least from her trance, but afterwards, when

¹ *Legenda*, I. ix. I (§ 80).